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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains a synopsis of eight action research projects undertaken by educators from various Utah public schools presented at a series of workshops. Twenty-seven educators representing 19 schools, 9 school districts, and the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) attended the series of 4 full-day workshops held during October, February, April, and June of the 1999-2000 school year. The participants were elementary and secondary teachers, principals, parents, counselors, district coordinators, and the character education specialist for the state. They identified research topics related to character education and learned how to conduct interviews, develop surveys, collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data, prepare a report or presentation, and use the action research results to modify their character education initiatives. Projects delineated in the booklet after a note from the USOE Character Education Specialist, are: "Improving Character Education Initiatives through Action Research" (Jennifer S. Johns); "Faculty and Student Perceptions of School" (John Burton and Others); "Parent Perceptions of Academic and Character Education Program" (Mike Madeo); "Character Traits and Expectations" (Jennifer Mortensen); "Improving Reading Instruction in the Middle School" (Rosanne Markham); "Teacher Implementation of Community of Caring in Curriculum and School Environment" (Chris Campbell Gremler); "Student Council Character Education Action Plan" (Cris Labrum); "Character Development Action Research Forums" (Becky Cox); and "Character Education in the Classroom" (Bob Wood and Others). A complete list of Action Research Workshop participants is included. (BT)

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Utah Character Education Action Research Projects.

Utah State Office of Education, Salt Lake City

SO 033 685

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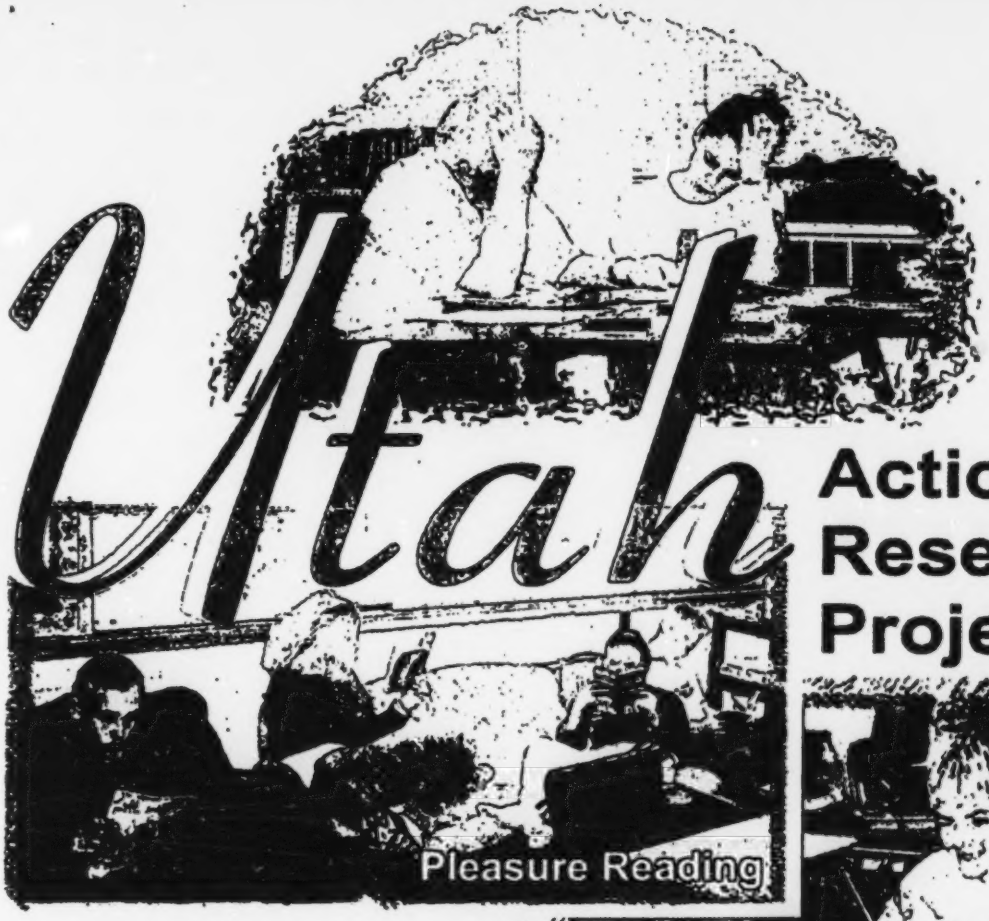
Utah Action Research Projects



Character Education

Utah State Office of Education
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Improving Character Education Initiatives Through Action Research

Jennifer S. Johns

As part of Utah's continuing commitment to character education and professional development, the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) sponsored a series of four action research workshops during the 1999-2000 school year. Action research is a reflective process that can be used by educators to study a variety of issues related to teaching and learning (in this case) character development initiatives. Collaborative action research is an exciting, dynamic professional development tool because it encourages collegial interaction, results in objective inquiry, and contributes to professional knowledge regarding the field of education by practitioners. Action research involves a cyclical process of identifying an issue to investigate, collecting and analyzing data, summarizing the results, and taking action based on what was learned.

Twenty-seven educators representing 19 schools, nine school districts, and the USOE attended the series of four full-day workshops held during October, February, April, and June of the 1999-2000 school year. The participants were elementary and secondary teachers, principals, parents, counselors, district coordinators, and the character education specialist for the state. They identified research topics related to character education and learned how to conduct interviews, develop surveys, collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data, prepare a report or presentation, and use the action research results to modify their character education initiatives. This booklet contains synopses of eight of the action research projects conducted by workshop participants.

Each workshop consisted of an instructional component, delivered through a variety of traditional and unusual methods; application of content in individual and small group activities; synthesis of learning through large group discussion and sharing; and evaluation of workshop activities and processes. While the major focus of the workshops was action research, each workshop featured a whimsical theme that emphasized the importance of brain-related research to character development and excellent teaching.

The action research series appeared to be a transformational professional experience for many of the participants. Educators indicated that action research changed their perceptions of research and teaching, provided a useful tool for improving character education initiatives, improved communication in the schools, and contributed to their professional development. They appreciated the opportunity to discuss education with their colleagues and to reflect on their practice. Not only did they believe participating in action research had contributed to their professional growth as educators, they also felt empowered and experienced a renewed enthusiasm for teaching and administration.

Although not everyone was interested in making a presentation at a conference or publishing an article in a journal, they were committed to locally sharing the results of their action research and participating in a support group of action researchers. In addition, several educators are planning to make presentations at the second series of action research workshops, to be held in Washington County School District during the 2000-2001 school year.

For more information about the individual action research projects, please contact the person indicated at the end of each article. For additional copies of this publication, contact Kristin Fink of the USOE at kfink@usoe.k12.ut.us. For information about the next series of action research workshops, contact Becky Cox of Washington County Schools at cox@infowest.com. For information about conducting a series of action research workshops in your school district, contact Jennifer Johns at JJohnsEval@aol.com.

Action Research Participants
1999-2000

Alpine School District*
Ann Adamson (Legacy)
John Burton (Legacy)
Rudy Dominguez (Legacy)
Carolyn Johnson (Legacy)

Alpine School District
Vallen Thomas (Lone Peak)

Box Elder School District*
Mike Madeo (Lake View)

Emery School District*
Jennifer Mortensen (Ferron)

Emery School District
Dan M. Wells (Cleveland)
DeeAnne Ward (Cleveland)

Granite School District*
Rosanne Markham (Evergreen)

Granite School District*
Chris Campbell Gremler (District)

Murray School District
Jan Judd (Riverview)

North Summit School District
Dave Peck (North Summit)

Uintah School District*
Cris Labrum (Vernal)

Uintah School District
Arlene Murrary (Ashley Valley Ed. Center)
Beth Murphy (Ashley Valley Ed. Center)
Pat Burdick (District)

Washington School District*
Sue Boswell (Woodward, Coral Cliffs)
Becky Cox (District)

Weber School District*
Cheryl Greenhalgh (Country View)
Karen Hunter (H. Guy Child)
Thelma Isaacson (Parent)
Christie Jacobsen (Club Heights)
Janet Rice (Pioneer, Kanesville & Weber)
Francis Spackman (Green Acres)
Bob Wood (District)

Utah State Office of Education
Kristin Fink

Facilitator
Jennifer S. Johns

*Indicates action research project is included in this publication.

"Faculty and Student Perceptions of School"
Legacy Elementary, Alpine School District

Focus of Action Research Project

The focus of our action research project was to find out general faculty attitudes concerning teaching, preparation, inservice, and the strengths and weaknesses of our school. The student survey was to find out attitudes toward learning, both at home and at school, as well as how students felt about the safety of our school. Since this was our first attempt at completing an action research project, we created a very general survey giving us a variety of information about our school.

Information Collected

We developed three surveys, one for faculty and two for students (a primary and an intermediate level). We gathered our faculty together before school and had them fill out a survey. They were not required to identify themselves, except for grade level taught. We collected those surveys and then asked the teachers to give the student surveys to their classes that morning by 10:00 a.m. We analyzed the faculty data together, but analyzed the student data separately by grade level. We presented the results in colored bar graphs using Powerpoint. A sample of the third grade results is included in this article.

Results

All faculty members indicated that they enjoyed teaching at Legacy Elementary. More than half of the faculty reported that they spent two or more hours in preparation outside of the contract day, while more than 90 percent spent one or more hours preparing. Almost all faculty members participated in two or more inservice sessions or classes during the past year. Half of the faculty rated reading and language arts as their favorite subject to teach, while about a fourth selected math. The least favorite subject they taught was physical education, followed by math and computers. The biggest concern expressed by faculty was regarding at-risk children. This was followed by moderate concern about testing and peer relationships. The areas of least concern were demands from the administration, parental support, and lunchroom. The greatest strengths at Legacy were perceived to be the school's atmosphere, discipline, and grade level teamwork. The student body, facilities, and parental support were also considered to be strengths of the school.

The majority of students at all grade levels indicated that they like going to school. Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 indicated that art was their favorite subject, followed by physical education and math. When asked in what subject students would like more help, most selected math and social studies. Students felt that computers would be more interesting if different activities were used. The majority of students spent less than an hour a day on homework. There was a decline in the number of books read each month between third and sixth grade. While the majority of third graders reported reading six or more books a month, by sixth grade the majority said they read three to four books a month. Part of the reason for this decline may be that third graders are reading chapter books while sixth graders are reading longer trade books. Most students in third through sixth grades said they read less than an hour a day at home.

Most students indicated that they felt safe at school and that if someone hurt them they would tell a school official. As students got older, while the majority still indicated that they would tell a school official, more students were likely to handle the problem themselves, tell their parents, or fight back. The majority of students in third grade said they had never cheated on a test or

homework assignment, but the incidence of cheating rose until by sixth grade the numbers who said they had cheated and the numbers who said they hadn't were approximately equal. When asked what their biggest concerns were at school, most students selected tests, with slight increases in concern in the upper grades over class work and peer pressure. All in all, students seemed to like school—the majority of students in third through sixth grades indicated they would go to school even if they didn't have to!

Using the Results of Our Action Research Project

During our May faculty meeting we shared the results with the faculty as a group. One important piece of information we learned was that the general attitude towards education, teaching, and school atmosphere was very positive. We came to the conclusion that the surveys provided information to use in setting up an action research project in the fall to glean more specific information. Although we found many things about our survey that we would like to change, we are excited about starting a new, improved project in the fall. We all felt that jumping in "head first" was to our advantage. We lost our fear of action research and gained an understanding of the benefits that could come from doing such a project. We are looking forward to a more specific action research survey in the fall to acquire practical, detailed information for school improvement.

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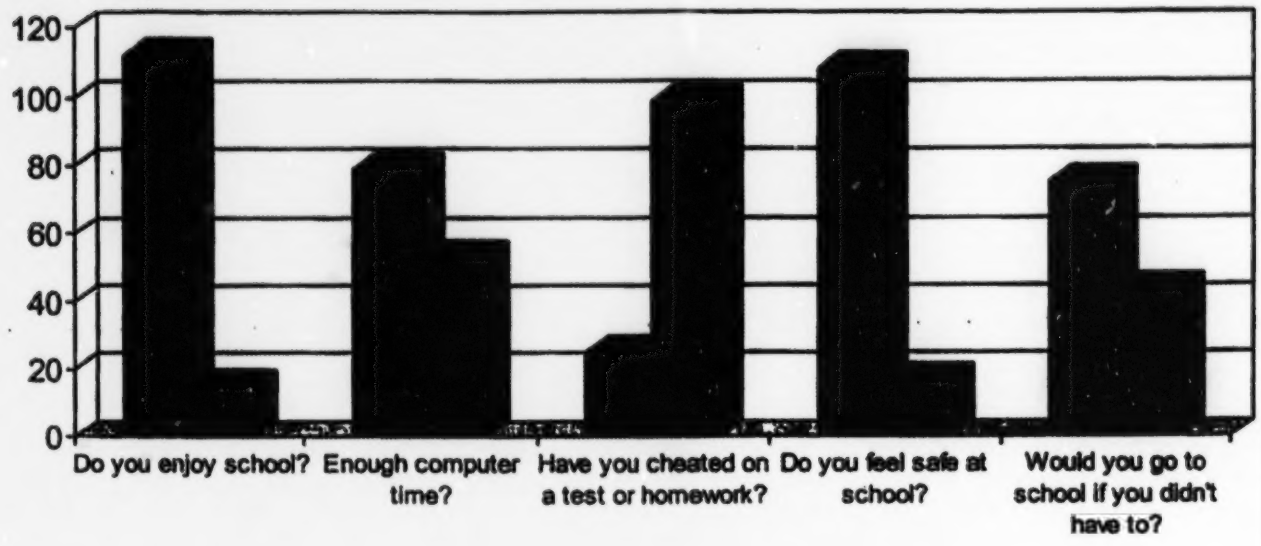
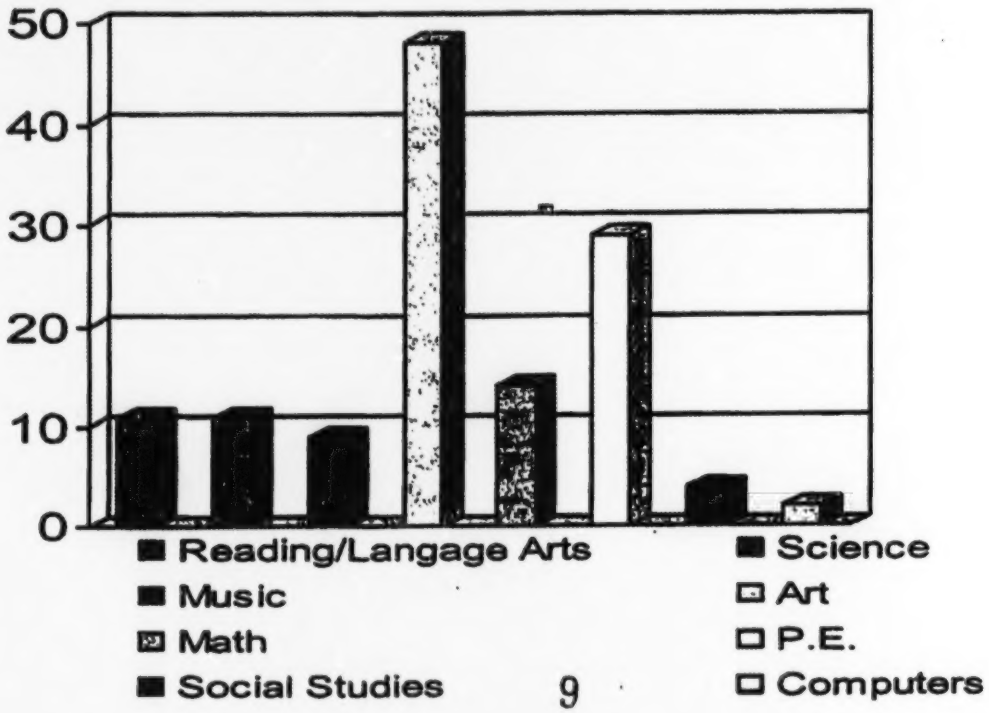
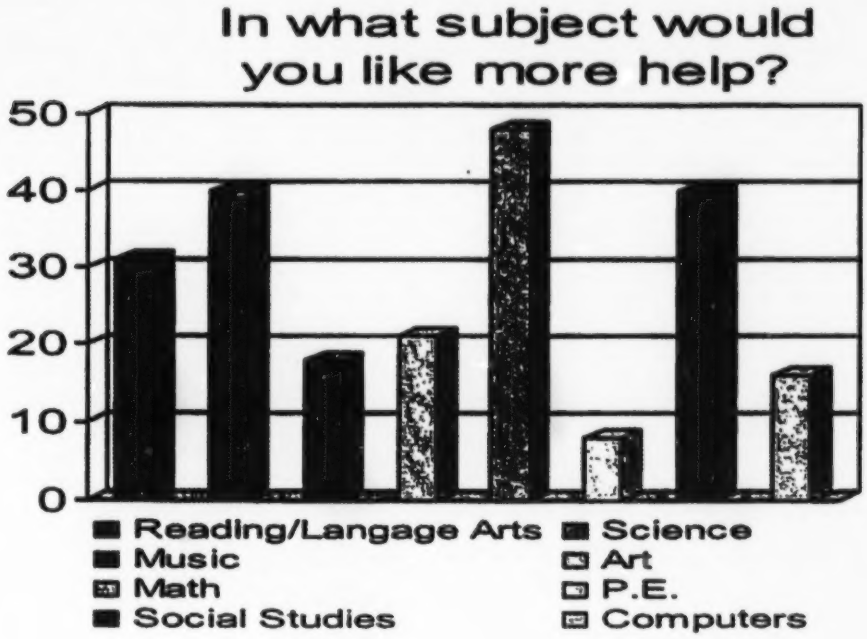
Third Grade Survey

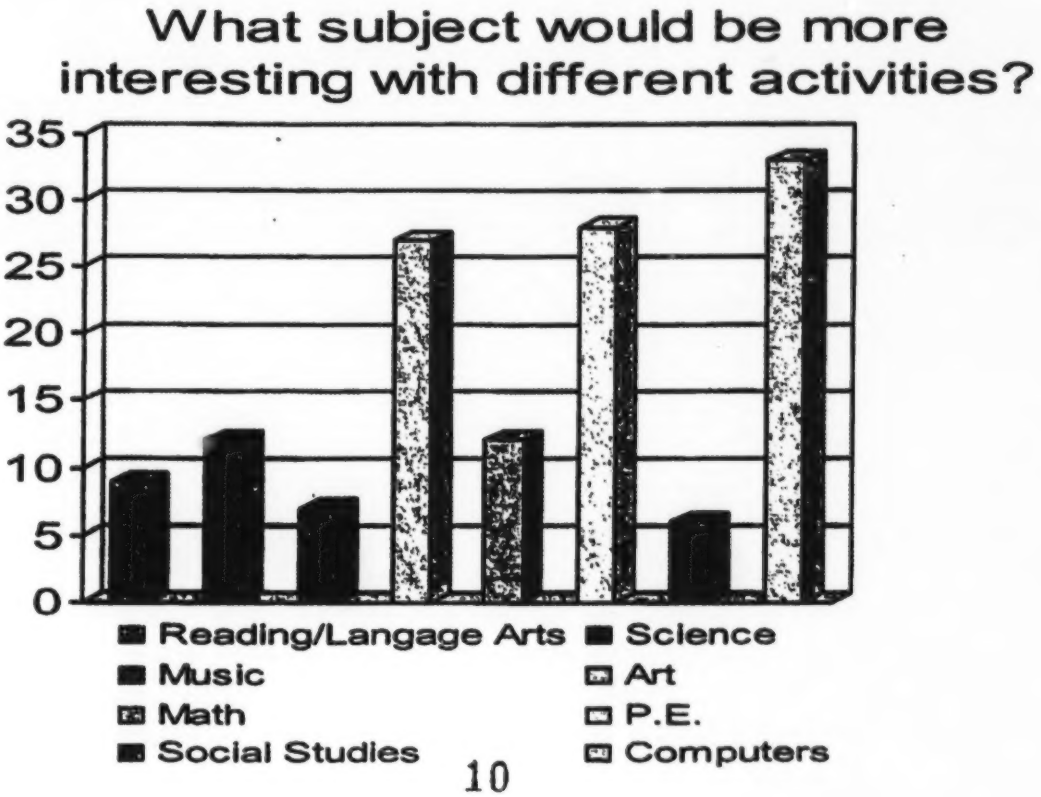


What is your favorite subject?



Third Grade Survey

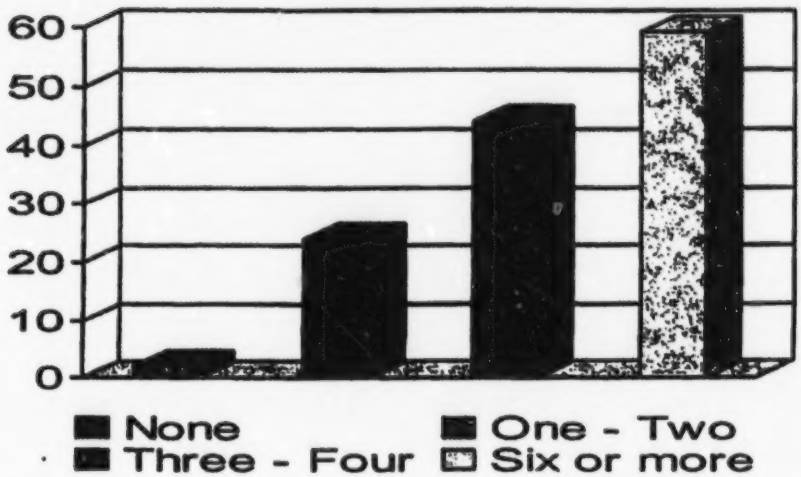




Third Grade Survey

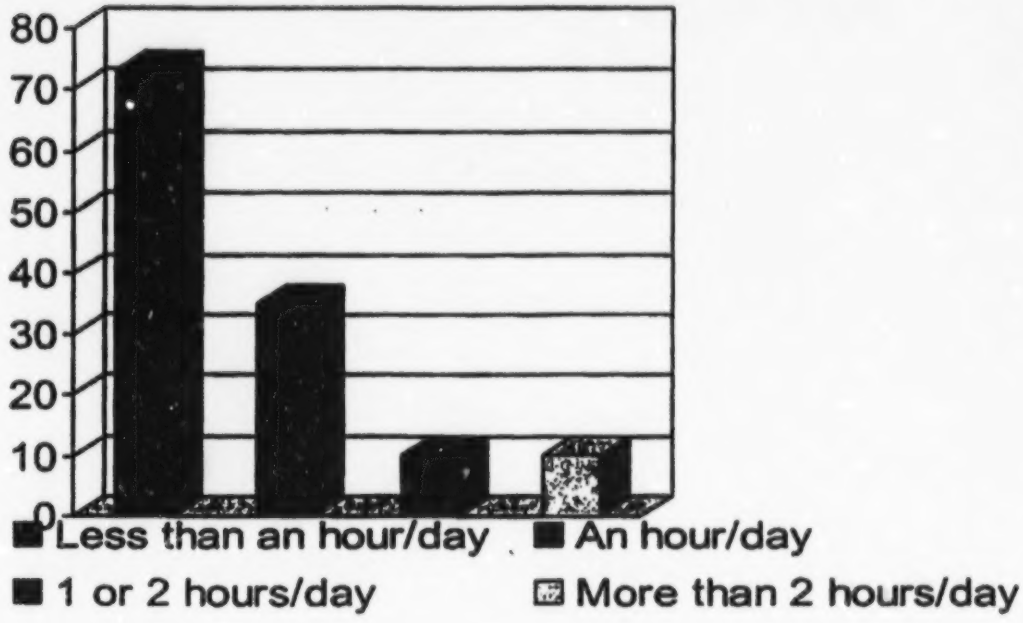
How much time do you spend on homework?

How many books do you read each month?

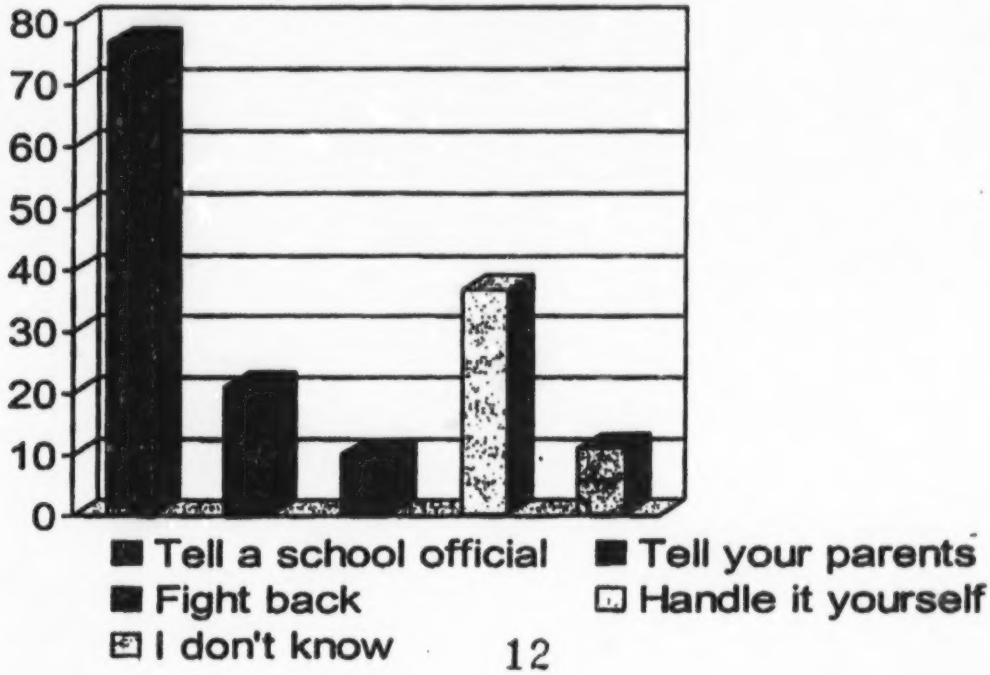


Third Grade Survey

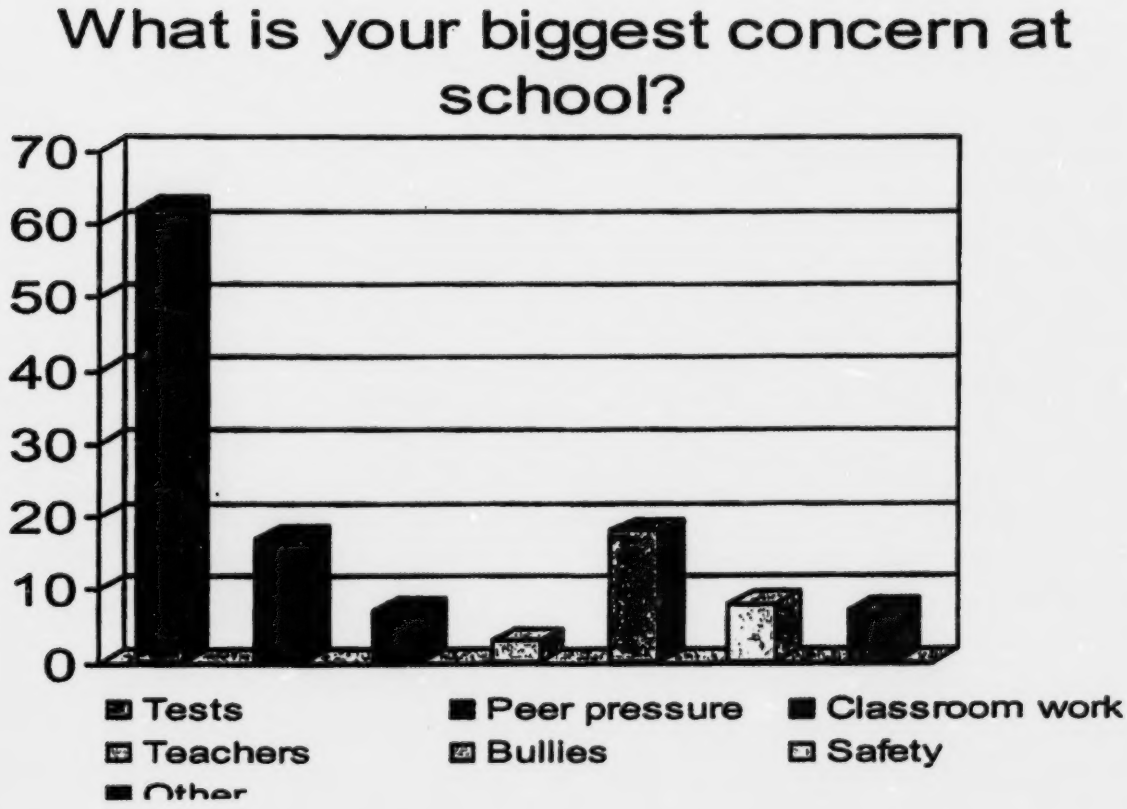
How much time do you spend reading each day at home?



What would you do if someone hurt you at school?



Third Grade Survey



"Parent Perceptions of Academic and Character Education Program"
Lake View Elementary, Box Elder School District

Focus of Action Research Project

I wanted to evaluate the perceptions of parents regarding Lake View's teaching of some academic areas, as well as issues related to feelings about staff and our character education program.

Information Collected

I sent an eleven-question survey home with each child. The children returned the surveys to their teachers. Two hundred fourteen surveys out of 412 were returned, for a response rate of 52 percent. We tabulated the results by teacher, grade, and total school.

Results

The majority of parents who responded to the survey indicated that their expectations regarding the teaching of academic subjects were usually or always met. In addition, they felt that Lake View was a nurturing place for their children. More than 84 percent of parent respondents indicated that their child always liked his/her teacher, while 99 percent always or usually liked the principal. More than half of the parents felt their children always had been positively affected by the values discussed at Lake View, while an additional 44 percent said their children usually were positively affected. Parents also indicated that their students made positive comments about the values-related assemblies held at Lake View—45 percent of parents said their children always made positive comments, while 40 percent said they usually commented positively.

ITEM	Always	Usually	Seldom	Never
Reading	64.5%	35.4%	0.1%	--
Math	61.3%	38.6%	0.1%	--
Language Arts	63.1%	36.7%	0.2%	--
Science	60.0%	33.0%	7.0 %	--
Arts	54.0%	34.0%	11.8%	0.2%
Nurturing School	60.0%	39.7%	0.3%	--
Teachers	83.4%	16.5%	1.0%	--
Principal	60.0%	33.0%	6.6%	0.4%
Values Affected Positively	56.0%	43.5%	0.3%	0.2%
Assemblies	45.0%	40.0%	14.6%	0.4%

Putting the Results to Use

I completed tabulating the data in June, and so have not yet used it. I am planning to do the following things with this data:

- Present the survey results to each teacher individually.
- Present the survey results to the staff collectively in a meeting.
- Present the survey results to the PTA executive committee.
- Present the survey results to the parents at Back to School Night.
- Use the results to guide decisions that I must make.

I felt that the action research project was beneficial for four major reasons. First, the stakeholders of the school, in this case the parents, had an opportunity to provide their opinions. Second, the decisions made as a result of the data analysis are perceived by students, staff, parents, and the school district as being more objective, rather than capricious. Third, issues were identified that were not previously seen as needing attention. Finally the perceptions of stakeholders can be used to direct future implementation of programs, as the evaluation yields a data action plan.

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"Character Traits and Expectations"
Ferron Elementary, Emery County School District

Focus of Action Research Project

For character education in our school, we have been focusing on six character traits that were decided upon by our district. We wanted the students to become familiar with these traits and know the expectations for good character at our school.

Information Collected

A survey was developed about the character traits that are the focus of our character education efforts. The survey was administered to the students in first through sixth grades and to the faculty and staff. The survey asked students and staff to rank statements about each trait and how the students in our school related to the trait. It also asked what they felt the school's expectations were towards each trait. These rankings were based on a scale of 1-5, with a ranking of 1 meaning that the trait hardly ever appeared and a ranking of 5 meaning it almost always appeared.

Results

Most of the character traits were ranked around a 3, meaning they were exhibited sometimes. Students and faculty felt that even though the student body generally exhibited the character traits that we had focused on, sometimes the students did not portray these traits.

Faculty and staff felt that there were clear expectations for good character at our school, giving an average ranking of 4.5 on these questions. Most of the students were aware of the school's expectations for good character, giving an average ranking of 4.3 on these questions. This let us know that the teachers are setting expectations and that this message is reaching the students.

Putting the Results to Use

We decided to continue presenting the six character traits in the classroom, reinforcing these traits with the students. We have also decided to supplement these traits with lessons on problem solving skills and conflict resolution.

We are going to present the results of this research to the faculty and staff in a faculty meeting. We would like to discuss ways in which we can make sure that we are consistent and clear in our expectations for good character in our school.

Contact Person

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"Improving Reading Instruction in the Middle School"
Evergreen Junior High School, Granite School District

Focus of Action Research Project

As part of a 21st Century Grant, our school identified the lowest readers in the eighth and ninth grades who were not being serviced either by resource or ESL programs, and invited them to be in a special English class to build their reading abilities. Our goal was to raise their scores by ten percentile points, and, ideally, to raise them to the fiftieth percentile (grade level). These students were identified by their scores on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) that was administered school wide. As the teacher of this class, I wanted to have measurable results for these students and provide the best possible learning environment to meet their individual needs. My research focused on the following question: Which teaching practices would affect these students the most as they improved both their abilities to read and their interest in reading?

Information Collected

In addition to the initial SDRT testing, I individually tested each student; using graded word lists to determine their approximate reading level. Students also were given timed reading tests to determine their reading speed. I began this testing at the beginning of the second semester of the school year and implemented my new program following the testing. Throughout the semester, students were given timed reading tests, coached reading evaluations, and comprehension tests on the materials they were reading. At the end of the semester, students were retested with the SDRT to determine if any improvement was made. Finally, students wrote personal reflections about their experiences.

Results

Initial SDRT testing placed the eighth grade students, on average, at the 13th percentile and the ninth grade students, on average, at the 16th percentile on a national scale. This meant that their grade-level equivalents averaged between 4.6 and 4.9. During the first half of the school year, I focused on teaching reading strategies (i.e., expository vs. narrative text structures, building background knowledge, accessing prior knowledge, slowing down when reading difficult text, note-taking, mapping, and vocabulary in context). However, when I retested the students at mid-year I found that they had not significantly increased their reading abilities. The students' scores still ranged between the third grade and low seventh grade reading levels. Strategy instruction alone did not help them conquer their reading problems. They were still decoding a word at a time, reading less than 100 words per minute, and avoiding reading at all costs. Comprehension was extremely low and reading for pleasure was nonexistent.

I restructured my classroom into a reading workshop with daily direct instruction for each student, with a focus on building reading skills along with comprehension. Because these students read incorrectly every time they picked up text, they could not improve. Reading is like any other skill; if it is practiced incorrectly, you can never become proficient. The classroom was divided into three rotations each day: (1) silent reading for pleasure using books on tape; (2) timed readings to increase reading speed and coached reading (reading graded selections on tape followed by rereading aloud to a reading coach to practice reading perfectly); and (3) individual reading instruction with me to focus on a variety of reading skills (e.g., chunking, test-taking strategies, vocabulary building, comprehension building, scanning, etc.). We held our reading workshop three days each week and had a writer's workshop two days each week. In addition, students read silently for eighteen minutes every day, including writer's workshop days.

The results of these changes in reading instructional methods can be seen in the following table.

STUDENT	GRADE	GRADE LEVEL		PERCENTILE	
		PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Student 1	8	3.6	4.8	6	14
Student 2	8	5.5	7.3	20	34
Student 3	8	3.6	8.6	7	48
Student 4	8	5.1	7.8	15	40
Student 5	8	4.0	8.6	10	48
Student 6	8	5.6	6.4	22	30
Student 7	8	4.8	9.1	14	52
Student 8	8	4.0	5.8	10	27
Student 9	8	4.6	5.2	13	16
Student 10	8	5.1	5.7	15	25
AVERAGE		**4.6**	**6.9**	**13.2**	**33.4**
Student 11	9	5.7	9.3	23	52
Student 12	9	6.1	5.7	26	23
Student 13	9	3.6	4.3	6	11
Student 14	9	5.3	7.5	21	34
Student 15	9	4.3	5.5	11	18
Student 16	9	4.0	5.4	9	17
Student 17*	9	6.1	5.8	26	25
Student 18	9	4.2	5.7	10	23
Student 19*	9	4.8	4.3	12	11
Student 20	9	5.3	6.1	16	26
AVERAGE		**4.9**	**6.0**	**16**	**24**

*These students refused to use the headphones during instruction.

In addition to dramatic increases on the SDRT, students also increased their reading speeds from less than 100 wpm to an average of 300 wpm with 80 percent or better comprehension.

Putting the Results to Use

I will be structuring my reading classes this way again next year. I am excited to see the progress students will make when they have an entire year with these methods. I believe that we must teach students *how* to read well before they can use the strategies that are so important for retention and comprehension. In addition to using the reading workshop next year, I am also trying to arrange for my students to volunteer as reading buddies with the elementary school in a yearlong service learning project. I believe that, as they help others, they will increase their confidence as readers themselves and begin to understand the importance of reading.

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"Teacher Implementation of Community of Caring in Curriculum and School Environment"
Granite School District

Focus of Action Research Project

As the coordinator for character education in Granite District, I oversee the Community of Caring program for 91 schools, K-12. This program is very successful in some schools but not in others. I wanted to see if there were common factors in the schools that had weak programs so that I could find ways to strengthen them. Because I have so many schools to cover, I focused this research on *secondary schools only*. This is also where the majority of our funding goes.

Information Collected

I used questions from the Implementation Survey, developed by Jennifer S. Johns for the Utah Community Partnership for Character Development. This survey asked about teacher training, values in the curriculum, and opportunities for service. I added the following five "yes/no" statements:

- Teachers in my school are recognized by other teachers, the PTA, or the administration for positive teaching practices.
- I feel teachers and administration support new ideas and creative teaching techniques.
- My school is a caring environment.
- Teachers treat each other with respect.
- I have the Community of Caring values posted in my room.

This survey was administered to four schools, two that have very strong Community of Caring programs and two whose programs are weak. These schools were representative of the higher and lower socioeconomic regions of Granite District. One was a high school; the other three were junior highs. I also interviewed the Lead Teachers in each of these schools for their perceptions of their programs.

Results

As a result of this research I have found that, as a general statement, the schools that have a strong Community of Caring program have offered their teachers training in the form of inservice or time in faculty meetings. Even in the successful schools most of the teachers were not on committees, nor had they attended character education conferences. In the table below, schools with strong programs are designated A and B, and less successful schools are C and D.

ITEM	A	B	C	D
Attended faculty meeting or inservice about character education.	65%	77%	32%	47%
Participated in school committees related to character education.	55%	29%	27%	27%
Attended workshop, conference or class on character education.	65%	35%	41%	50%

In all four schools surveyed, the majority of teachers have developed some curriculum focusing on values that they use in their classroom, but to what extent it is used is not known.

Questions also were asked about caring environments and respect for each other. The two schools that have strong programs scored slightly higher in these two areas than did the weaker programs.

ITEM	A	B	C	D
My school is a caring environment.	88%	100%	73%	90%
Teachers treat each other with respect.	90%	100%	82%	80%

Teachers were asked to rank their involvement in character education efforts. In Schools A and B, the majority of the teachers ranked themselves between 5-10, with 10 being very involved. In School C, the majority of the respondents ranked themselves below 5; in School D they were evenly distributed between 0-10.

When asked how important it is for schools to focus on character education, all four schools indicated that a majority of the faculty felt it was *important* to *very important*.

There is little doubt that teachers see the importance of character education in the schools. However, in order to integrate it into their curriculum and to support existing and new programs, they need to receive training on a continuous basis, as well as feel like they are cared about and respected by other teachers and the administration. Community of Caring, or any character education program, cannot belong only to the facilitator of that program. They need to provide inservice and promote a caring, positive environment in their schools. This can be done in a variety of ways through the steering committee, PTA, and the administration's support.

Putting the Results to Use

After evaluating the need for training for teachers, I have decided that providing an inservice for faculty will be a part of required activities to receive funding. I will conduct those meetings if the lead teacher requests it, or they can do it themselves, whichever they are most comfortable with.

Monthly inservices on numerous character education topics (i.e., service learning, values in the curriculum, brain-compatible learning, connecting with the Olympics, etc.) will be offered on a district level. All interested teachers will be invited to these inservices, not just the Lead Teacher in each school. By offering a variety of topics, we hope to encourage teachers to take advantage of these opportunities and also see the tie between character education and the things in which they are interested.

At the end of the 2000-01 school year, selected secondary schools will again be surveyed regarding their participation and feelings about character education in their schools.

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"Student Council Character Education Action Plan"
Vernal Jr. High, Uintah School District

Focus of Action Research Project

For the past two years, our Student Council has taken on the task of creating an intentional character education program for our student body. During the first year, we used our live TV school announcement time to implement character-building skills by means of information only. During the second year, a Homebase class was added to the daily schedule to give students a chance to connect with an adult, to provide an advisory time, and to allow for character education to be a part of instructional time. This Homebase class allowed us to include a character activities/service learning component in our plan. The faculty was averse to the Homebase class, and at midyear it was removed from the daily schedule. Our Student Council now needed to determine what did and didn't work, and how we could best change our action plan.

Information Collected

The Student Council members wrote two surveys—one for students, and one for teachers. Each survey asked similar questions focusing on the effectiveness of:

1) Live TV announcement time and Channel One News time;
2) "Learning" about good character and "doing" good character; and
3) The advisory experience.

About 76 percent of our student body and faculty members completed the surveys. These surveys were tallied by Student Council members and the results presented to a group of approximately 75 students and later, to the faculty. As the results were presented, comments were recorded in order to gather as many different views of the data as possible.

Results

1) Live TV announcement time is highly supported (93.5%) by our staff and students, and it is more effective when it is a part of a regular class period. Both groups (90.5%) felt that they are more aware of school activities as a result of live TV announcements. Channel One News is viewed by almost everyone (90.2%).

2) During the Homebase class, half (52%) of students said they learned about good character, while half (50%) of teachers said they were able to teach about good character. A little more than half (57.7%) of the students said they were given the opportunity to give service, and more than half (59%) of teachers said students were given the opportunity to give service. About two-thirds (65%) of students said they were involved in character activities, and most (93.3%) of teachers said that students were involved in character activities.

3) Advisory time was supported by more than half (60%) of the students, and not supported by almost two-thirds (63.4%) of the faculty.

Putting the Results to Use

Based on our research, our Student Council will be making some changes for the next school year. We will be taking our first step to create a school Peer Leadership Team. Since the live TV

announcement time has been established as an effective method of communicating with our student body, a new broadcasting class has been added to our school's curriculum, and the Student Council will use this medium to better inform and hopefully activate our students' good character. More time will be spent focusing on the good things that happen at our school, and the Broadcasting class will be able to present what good character is by using our own examples. We are also looking forward to coverage of our character activities. Our school newspaper has done a great job of spotlighting our students and character activities, and has also committed to focusing more on good character. Students representing the Peer Leadership Team of the Student Council, the Broadcast class, and the newspaper will attend a youth leadership conference this summer to make their action plan. In the future, we plan to include clubs and student groups in our Peer Leadership Team.

We also feel that there are some mixed conceptions of what character education is among our faculty. Only half of our teachers said they taught about good character, but most teachers involved their classes in character activities. We are committed to providing positive and valuable character activities that will have the teacher teaching about good character, whether they know it or not. Teachers and students will have the option of participating during announcement time, as there will be no Homebase classes.

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"Character Development Action Research Forums"
Washington County School District

Focus of Action Research Project

"Carrying the Torch!" is our current Washington County School District Character Development Program. In an effort to expand this initiative to involve more schools and to document results the Character Development Action Research Forums were implemented. Schools had the autonomy to develop character programs to meet the needs and desires of their individual schools. All schools were invited to enter into an agreement with Washington County School District and to qualify for a mini-grant award. Each school formed a diverse school team consisting of four to eight members, including an identified contact person to coordinate character efforts at the school. The team participated in the action research process and developed and evaluated project(s) at their school. Representatives from each team attended three district character sharing and action research forums that were held once a month. School teams also shared project information in a written format and made brief presentations.

Ten schools entered into an agreement with the school district and participated in the forums. Each school was instructed to include classroom and school wide strategies, as well as to involve the community by using as a guide the "Comprehensive Approach to Values and Character Education" in Dr. Thomas Lickona's classic text: *Educating for Character—How Our Schools Can Teach* Respect and Responsibility (1991). Schools were given binders with pertinent information including Lickona's book, Educating for Character, A Primer for Evaluating a Character Education Initiative (Berkowitz), and How to Conduct Collaborative Action Research (Sagor). The kit published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development entitled, Action Research: Inquiry, Reflection, and Decision Making, was used to support instruction and materials provided by Jennifer S. Johns.

Information Collected

Forum participants were given a written evaluation response form that included four open-ended questions:

1) I appreciate...
2) I plan to use...
3) I suggest...
4) My comments are...

An informal discussion followed the final meeting in the spring to provide feedback about future directions. This was a lively discussion that helped to provide a foundation for the 2000-2001 program year for the district. Many felt that the Character Development Action Research Forums had been the most beneficial assistance they had received to assist them in moving ahead with school character plans. The assessment of school teams that worked with the Character Development Forums in the spring of 2000 indicated that this approach was very helpful to them in learning more about character programs and action research, and in facilitating sharing with other local schools.

Results

Character Development Teams will continue to meet in the schools to proceed with their individual programs. Each school is working on an individual timetable so school project results

will be reported primarily during the 2000-2001 school year. Community efforts can now be better coordinated. One of the greatest results is the sharing of information so that everyone knows what is being done and can support and mentor each other in more positive ways. Meeting together has provided greater synergy within the district and added energy to the character program in Washington County.

Putting the Results to Use

District Forums will be offered every other month and school support from the Washington County District Team will occur at respective schools on alternating months. Fifteen schools will participate during the 2000-2001 school year. Action Research Workshops will be conducted in the fall, winter, and spring by Jennifer S. Johns to increase the efforts of schools in evaluating character programs. The Character Education Quality Standards–A Self-Assessment Test for Schools and Districts developed by the Character Education Partnership will be used in all of the fifteen schools to assist in developing quality programs.

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"Character Education in The Classroom"
Weber School District

Focus of Action Research Project

We are in the second year of a three-year grant to enhance character education in Weber School District. We use the Acquiring Ethical Guidelines for Individual Self-Governance (AEGIS) program for our basic curriculum. In addition to AEGIS, we use monthly themes, Love and Logic, lending libraries, and service learning. Our focus was to evaluate the components of our program so that we might make changes to improve the overall character education program in our district.

Information Collected

We developed five surveys on the following topics:

- Character Education Curriculum;
- AEGIS - Materials and Inservice Needs Assessment;
- Lending Libraries;
- Recognition of Character Traits and Academic Achievement; and
- Service Learning Projects.

We also used the Utah Community Partnership for Character Development Teacher Implementation Survey.

Results

We received a lot of information from the surveys that allowed us to get a feel for where we were and where we were heading. The Character Education Curriculum Survey gave us an overview of how schools are implementing character education. The survey was conducted by the Character Education Facilitator in each school, who reported for the entire school. The information was more general than if each teacher had responded individually, but at this point that was what we were looking for. The survey provided information about how and when character education was being taught at each school, including whether schools were using monthly themes, the "Blue Book," daily announcements, AEGIS, or other programs.

Two years ago, each school started a lending library to allow parents and teachers to check out character education materials. We surveyed each media specialist to find out the status of each library and its use. We also gained information about new materials that were needed in each library.

Service learning is certainly not new to education, and our teachers have been doing excellent projects for some time. We have been financing a few projects a year, but thought there probably were a lot of other projects going on that we didn't know about. The school facilitators summarized the ongoing projects by school and by grade. As we suspected, there were hundreds of service projects going on that help many people and develop in our students the desire to help each other.

The survey "Recognition of Character Traits and Academic Achievement" gave us a feel for the quantity and quality of existing programs that are used to recognize and encourage proper

behavior and academic excellence. It was encouraging to see the variety of ways we reach out to help students.

Putting the Results to Use

In sending out six surveys, we received a lot of information that we used to guide us in our decision making this year, and will continue to use for the next few years. Here is a sampling of what we did with the results and what we are planning to do.

- We will share the results with the school facilitators in the fall. This will give them a feel for what is being done in the district, and will give them some great ideas.
- We will produce additional "Blue Books."
- We will distribute a collection of daily thoughts to each school this summer.
- We produced and distributed additional copies of the AEGIS materials.
- We conducted inservice classes on the AEGIS materials for new teachers and for teachers who were not trained four years ago.
- Some schools realized that their lending libraries had disappeared, and they relocated the materials.
- New efforts were made by the schools to advertise the lending library materials to parents.
- Because each school reported different needs, they were allowed to choose the materials they needed (using district funds).

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